

**AMENDMENTS**

**Please amend the specification by replacing paragraph [0021] with the following:**

**[0021]       The high voltage protection circuit 42 connects with a conductor 44 connected with the membrane 14. The conductor 44 is a metal signal trace 19 (see Figure 1), the electrode 18, the electrode 20, doped silicon, or other now known or later developed conductor. In one embodiment, the high voltage protection circuit 42 connects directly with a signal trace 19 associated with the electrode 18 or 20. Alternatively, the high voltage protection circuit 42 connects with the signal trace 19 between the coupling capacitor 30 and the transmitter 38 or receiver 40. The high voltage protection circuit is connected with the conductor and associated CMUT element 10 either directly or indirectly. Direct connection may minimize risk from breakdown voltages by applying the high voltage protection immediately at the CMUT element 10.**